



Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks

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Job Overview

Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks keep records of all goods shipped and received by their businesses. Smaller firms usually hire Clerks to do both shipping and receiving, while bigger companies often hire workers to do shipping and receiving separately.

Accurate recordkeeping is essential to the timely and effective transportation of goods, which is a major component of logistics. It is of the utmost importance that records be kept of the dates goods are shipped out and received, that the names of carriers and the mode of transportation be logged, and that the quality and condition of goods received be reported.

Shipping Clerks are responsible for outgoing shipments. They determine that the right merchandise is being sent and is in as-ordered condition. They prepare bills of lading for commercial and other shipments. They record and report on warehouse activities. Shipping Clerks may also inspect trucks and vans to make sure they're clean when shipping such items as grain, flour, and milk.

Receiving Clerks handle arriving shipments. In many firms, Receiving Clerks either use handheld scanners to record barcodes on incoming products or manually enter the information into a computer. They open the containers and packages of received goods, using tools such as pry bars and wire cutters. They verify that the right goods were received. They make sure that the merchandise is in satisfactory condition. They inform adjustment claims personnel if shipments are damaged or not right. When necessary, Receiving Clerks route merchandise samples to quality control units.

Traffic Clerks keep records on the destination, weight, and charges on all incoming and outgoing freight. They check rate charges by means of rate charts. This work is often automated and computerized. Traffic Clerks also keep a file of claims for overcharges and damage to goods in transit.

Typical Tasks

- Examine contents and compare with records, such as manifests, invoices, or orders, to verify accuracy of incoming or outgoing shipment.
- Prepare documents, such as work orders, bills of lading, and shipping orders to route materials.
- Determine shipping method for materials, using knowledge of shipping procedures, routes, and rates.

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- Record shipment data, such as weight, charges, space availability, and damages and discrepancies, for reporting, accounting, and recordkeeping purposes.
- Contact carrier representative to make arrangements and to issue instructions for shipping and delivery of materials.
- Confer and correspond with establishment representatives to rectify problems, such as damages, shortages, and nonconformance to specifications.
- Requisition and store shipping materials and supplies to maintain inventory of stock.
- Deliver or route materials to departments, using work devices, such as handtruck, conveyor, or sorting bins.
- Compute amounts, such as space available, and shipping, storage, and charges for delays, using calculator or price list.
- Pack, seal, label, and affix postage to prepare materials for shipping, using work devices such as hand tools, power tools, and postage meter.

*Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.*

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- Time Management — Managing one's own time and the time of others.
- Mathematics — Using mathematics to solve problems.
- English Language — Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
- Transportation — Knowledge of principles and methods for moving people or goods by air, rail, sea, or road, including the relative costs and benefits.
- Clerical — Knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.
- Customer and Personal Service — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- Production and Processing — Knowledge of raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.
- Oral Expression — The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
- Problem Sensitivity — The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.

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Work Environment

Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks may work indoors and/or outdoors. Up-to-date shipping centers or large department stores are usually air-conditioned, well-heated and lighted. Clerks who work in large warehouses can experience uncomfortable temperatures, as these warehouses are often hot or cold.

Most jobs involve frequent standing, bending, walking, and stretching. The work can be strenuous, even though mechanical material-handling equipment is used to move heavy items. Clerks who ship and receive heavy merchandise can be injured and must be careful in handling orders. Some lifting and carrying of smaller items also may be involved.

Workers can experience pressure to ship and receive merchandise according to tight time schedules. This happens during certain “heavy” times of the year, such as Christmas and when firms get rush orders.

The typical workweek is Monday through Friday, but evening and weekend hours are commonplace and may be required when large shipments are involved.

Clerks may be members of the Teamster’s union or a number of other unions.

California’s Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks 43-5071	107,500	117,900	3,250	\$9.80 to \$16.15

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

With a growth rate of 9.7 percent, employment in this occupation is expected to lag behind the average for all occupations during the projections period. However, an estimated 22,100 job opportunities will be created by the need to replace Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks who retire or leave the occupation for other reasons.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Whether hired from outside the company, or promoted from within, some positions such as packer, order filler, or stock clerk, Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks are usually given supervised, on-the-job training.

Employers may require clerical experience and knowledge of office machines. Some prefer workers with experience in retail or manufacturing business operations. They may also prefer

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workers with knowledge of different shipping methods via U.S. postal and private parcel post service, via air, rail, and trucking.

Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks who handle alcohol, drugs, or jewelry may be required to be bonded. A valid driver license is required by some employers, and others may require a physical examination.

Recommended High School Course Work

Employers prefer applicants who are high school graduates. Recommended high school courses include computer technology, business arithmetic, and other business courses. Given that Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks must write correctly and spell accurately, high school courses in English are also helpful.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers is an effective job search method for journey-level Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search under the following industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ➔ Computer and Supply Merchant Wholesalers | ➔ Medical Equipment Merchant Wholesalers |
| ➔ Department Stores | ➔ Other Building Material Dealers |
| ➔ Discount Department Stores | ➔ Other General Merchandise Stores |
| ➔ Employment Placement Agencies | ➔ Paint and Wallpaper Stores |
| ➔ Hardware Stores | ➔ Professional Employer Organizations |
| ➔ Home Centers | ➔ Temporary Help Services |

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ➔ Air Cargo & Package Express Service | ➔ Packaging Service |
| ➔ Delivery Service | ➔ Packing & Crating Service |
| ➔ Freight Forwarding | ➔ Railroad Companies |
| ➔ Inventory Service | ➔ Trucking |
| ➔ Mail Receiving & Forwarding Service | ➔ Trucking-Motor Freight |
| ➔ Mailing Services | ➔ Warehouses-Public-Commercial |

The above is not a complete list. Many firms in various industries employ Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks.

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Where Can the Job Lead?

Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks who have demonstrated their skill and ability have a good chance for promotion, especially in larger companies. A typical promotion path is to head clerk, shipping and receiving supervisor, and warehouse manager. Chances for more advancement are better for workers who continue to improve their skills and pick up other skills. These workers may be promoted to traffic manager, buyer, or purchasing agent.

Related Occupations

Procurement Clerks
Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks
Stock Clerks- Stockroom, Warehouse, or Storage Yard (see Logistics Profile)
Weighers, Measurers, Checkers, and Samplers, Recordkeeping
Mail Clerks, Except Mail Machine Operators and Postal Service
Coin, Vending, and Amusement Machine Servicers and Repairers
Freight and Cargo Inspectors

Other Sources

International Brotherhood of Teamsters
www.teamster.org

Parcel
www.parcelindustry.com

Warehousing Education and Research Council
www.werc.org

